

EDITORIAL

The Midland counties of England are a focus of intensive working of rocks and minerals; Coal, gypsum, salt, iron ore, calcite, fluorspar, barytes, petroleum, chert, silica sands and ganister, sandstone, limestone, granite and basalt for roadmetal, clay for brickmaking, alluvial sands and gravels are all being exploited at the present, and in the past, copper, lead, zinc, and a number of other minerals. The history and geography of the region have thus been very directly determined by its geological circumstances.

It is therefore, perhaps, not surprising that there should be a widespread interest in geology in the Midlands. What is more surprising is that the region has failed to produce any geological society comparable in stature to the Yorkshire, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Liverpool and Manchester Societies. Certainly there have been numerous bodies with a geological interest, but usually this interest has been subsidiary. Birmingham and North Staffordshire have local branches of the Geologists' Association; and some other societies, notably the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society and the North Staffordshire Field Club, have strong geological sections. But that is all. Nor has the region given birth to any geological journal of stature: important papers on Midland geology have been published in reports or transactions of a number of societies, but there has been no obvious focus for such papers.

This geological vacuum has been at its most pronounced in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. Nonetheless, the existence in these counties of a considerable interest in geology has been made manifest by the way in which evening classes have flourished. It was the enthusiasm of two such classes, respectively under the tuition of Dr. Frank M. Taylor and the writer, which led directly to the formation of the East Midlands Geological Society. Membership has grown so swiftly that field meetings regularly attract attendances of 70 and indoor meetings, of over 100: the Society looks set for a bright future.

Publication of a journal was among the initial objects of the Society. It was felt that there was a real need for a journal to provide a milieu for the publication of work on Midlands geology. Geological research is at present especially intensive in this region: two conferences for geologists working in the Southern Pennines have been held at Keele University, with conspicuous success, and in the Welsh borderland, the Ludlow Research Group has been operative for a number of years. At present, publication of work on stratigraphy is relatively difficult: this topic falls outside the scope of many specialist journals. The "Proceedings of the Yorkshire Geological Society" is a natural focus for work on north-eastern England, the region in which that Society operates: the "Geological Journal", associated with the Liverpool and Manchester Geological Societies, fulfills a similar function for the north-west. The "Proceedings of the Geologist's Association", although by intent national in coverage, has come to be identified, rightly or wrongly, with south-eastern England. Papers dealing with Midlands geology have appeared in all three journals: but the societies sponsoring them have little association with the Midlands, and the amateur geologist, in particular, cannot identify himself with them.

It is hoped that "The Mercian Geologist" may come to be considered a natural place for the publication of work on the geology of the Midlands. Although the journal is specifically the organ of the East Midlands Geological Society, the scope of its contents is intended to be somewhat wider - a coverage of the counties of Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Rutland, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, southernmost Yorkshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Shropshire. Its name was chosen in this view: its content is intended to comprehend all aspects of Midland geology, together with review articles of more general geological interest.

In order to attain a balance between the requirements of the amateur and the professional

geologist, we hope to publish papers that are of real value but written with sufficient clarity and detail as to be readily comprehensible to readers with no more than a broad knowledge of the subject. Some authors have already been asked to lengthen their contributions with this end in view - surely a rare request from any Editor.

The potential value of work by amateur geologists is considerable. However, the amateur is often hesitant to place his results before the critical eye of the professional geologist, and much good work may be lost as a result. The Editorial Board is most willing to help meet difficulties in this direction by advising on presentation and by suggesting amendments: provided the work is of real value, no manuscript will be rejected simply on grounds of inadequate presentation. Articles and letters should be addressed either to the Editor or to the Secretary of the East Midlands Geological Society: contributions are invited equally from members and non-members.

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